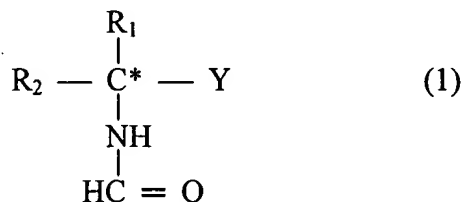


CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (currently amended): A process for the preparation of a compound with enhanced optical purity which comprises contacting a mixture of the enantiomers of a chiral compound of formula 1

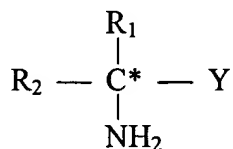


wherein:

R_1 represents an alkyl or an aryl group

R_2 represents H, an alkyl or an aryl group

Y represents an alkyl group, an aryl group, $(CH_2)_nCOOH$, $(CH_2)_n-COOR$, $(CH_2)_n-CONRR'$, CH_2OH , or $C \equiv N$ wherein R and R' independently represent H, an alkyl or aryl group, and n represents 0 or 1, with an enzyme ~~having which is a peptide deformylase activity~~ and with a bivalent metal ion as a cofactor, wherein the metal is a metal of the groups 5-11 of the periodic system, wherein one of the enantiomers is selectively deformylated, and wherein the compound with enhanced optical purity is of the formula



wherein R_2 , R_1 and Y are as in the compound of formula (1) contacted with said deformylase.

2-3. (canceled)

4. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the peptide deformylase is of the class EC 3.5.2.27 or EC 3.5.1.31.

5. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the peptide deformylase contains the sequences of (i) HEXXH (SEQ ID NO:1), (ii) EGCLS (SEQ ID NO:2) and (iii) GXGXAAAXQ (SEQ ID NO:3).

6. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the peptide deformylase is obtainable from *Escherichia coli*.

7. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the bivalent metal is Fe, Ni, Mn or Co.

8. (previously presented): The process of claim 7, wherein the bivalent metal is Ni.

9. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, which further comprises adding a stabilisation agent.

10. (previously presented): The process of claim 9 wherein the stabilisation agent is catalase.

11. (previously presented): The process of claim 9 wherein the bivalent metal is Fe.

12-19. (canceled)